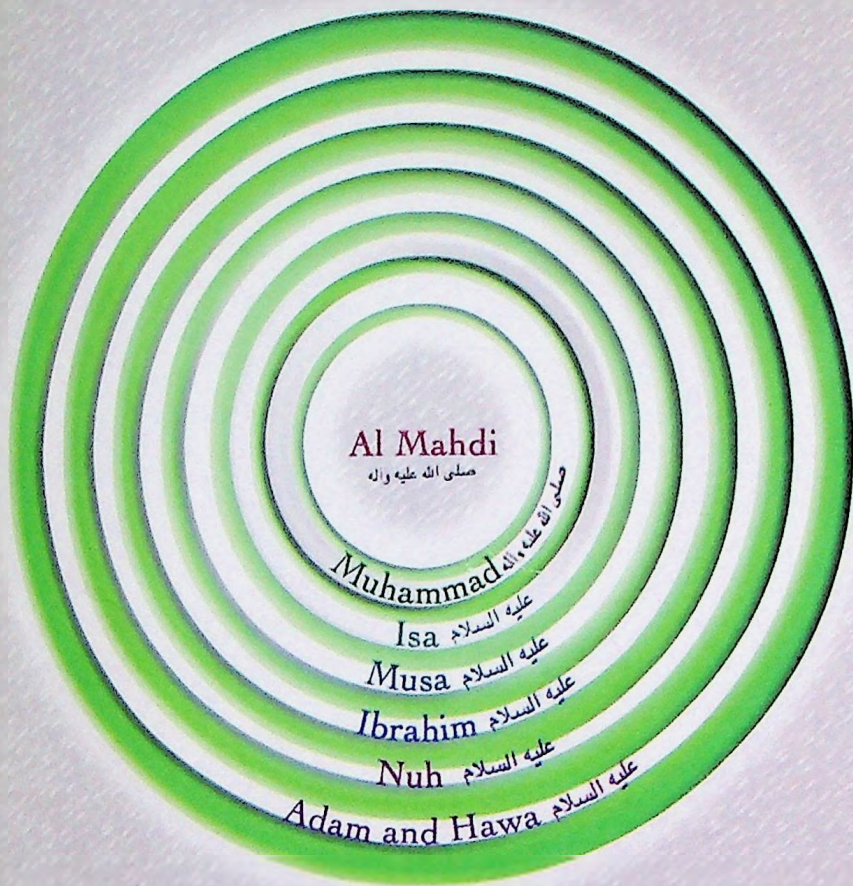


PROPHET ISA عليه السلام

AN 'ABD OF ALLAH: THE EXAMPLE OF ADAB

By Shaykh Ahmed Abdur Rashid



Fifth in a seven part series:

ULU-L-AZIM
THE GREAT ONES



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

PROPHET ISA ﷺ

An 'Abd of Allah:
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Sura al Fatiha

AL-HAMDU-LI-LLÄHI, MUQALIBA-L-QULÛBI WA-L-
ABSÄR.
ALLÄHUMMA ThABIT QULÛBANA °ALA SIRÄTIKA-L-
QAWÎM,
WA-J°ALNÄ LI-WAJHIKA MUTTAJIHÎN,
WA SALLI °ALA-Sh-ShAFI°I-L-HABIB,
RAHMATIL-°ÄLAMÎN,
WA MANÄRI-L-NAJIYÎN, WA MARSÄ-L-°ÄRIFÎN

Praise be to Allah ﷻ, the turner of the hearts and sight.
O Allah ﷻ, fix our hearts on the best of Your ways,
and make us face You in our way,
and bestow blessings on the beloved intercessor,
the mercy of all the worlds,
the lighthouse of the survivors, the harbor of the knowers.

YÄ MAWJÛDAN °INDA-Sh-ShADÄÄ°IDI
YÄ KHAFIYYA-L-LUTFI, YÄ LATIFA-S-SUN°I
YÄ HALÎMAN, LÄ YA°JILUQDI HÄJATÎ
BI-RAHMATIKA, YÄ ARHAMA-R-RÄHIMÎN.
SUBHÄNAKA °ALÄ HILMIKA BA°DA °ILMIK.
SUBHÄNAKA °ALÄ °AFWIKA BA°DA QUDRATIK

O Existent One, O Thou who are Present in all difficulties.
O Thou of Hidden Kindness, of Subtle making.
O Gentle One, Who does not hasten, fulfill my need,
With Thy Mercy, O most Merciful of the Mercifuls.
Glory be to Thee, on Thy Grace, after Thy Knowledge.
Glory be to Thee, on Thy forgiveness, after Thy Power.

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an tells us that there have been 124,000 prophets throughout time and it relates to us many of their lives and stories. Today we are gathered to speak about the Prophet Isa عليه السلام, the second to last of the Messengers; the last prophet before Rasool Allah ﷺ. As we move in this series on the Messengers, from Hazrat Adam عليه السلام to Nuh عليه السلام, and Nuh عليه السلام to Hazrat Ibrahim, and Ibrahim عليه السلام to Musa عليه السلام to Isa عليه السلام, we see that each represents something unique, while also reflecting and reinforcing everything that has come before.

Each of these messengers was sent as a mercy from Allah ﷻ to teach the worship and remembrance of Allah ﷻ through a progressive unveiling of character potential. Each was as exemplary human who both reflects the time they lived in and also shows the inner journey to perfection under diverse and real circumstances. Their lives illustrate how one's demeanor influences the occurrences of one's life and the lives of others. Each Messenger and message builds upon the other, until we come to the last brick in the building, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

By the time we arrive at the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ we will see even more clearly the progression through these prophets, from Adam عليه السلام and the acceptance of the Amanat and clarification of the Presence of Allah swt in Names and attributes to the last Prophet (Muhammad ﷺ), who is not only a warner, a prophetic figure, a teacher and guide but also a social and political leader, a mystic and a living example of the human potential.

Imam al-Bukhari related that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

The prophets are like brothers from the same father with different mothers. Their Religion is one although their share'ah differed. I am the most akin to the Prophet Isa. There was no other prophet between us.

There is a special relationship between these two last prophets: Isa عليه السلام and Muhammad ﷺ; Isa عليه السلام foretold the coming of the Prophet

Muhammad ﷺ and Muhammad ﷺ felt a special closeness with Isa عليه السلام, the last prophet before him.

The Prophet Isa عليه السلام represents perhaps one of the first examples of the teacher, the Murshid who addresses the corrupt society of the Romans and the priests in the temple, who gathers *muredeen* around him including his own cousin Yahya (who himself rises to prophethood), who comes at a time when guidance is needed ...a disintegrating Roman Empire, corrupt and materialistic, an objectified Priest class, and people who are more and more forgetful of the spirit and the essence of faith.

He was a guide not only in words but deeds; a miraculous individual born to the role of Prophet ...speaking from the cradle, affirming his own position and role by acts of kindness and mercy, by humility and faith and by human qualities that enable us to identify directly with his challenges and choices. Albeit he lived that public life for only 3 years, it left an indelible mark on all of humanity to this day.

As we speak today about the Prophet Isa عليه السلام, we acknowledge that there are many ways of looking at him and that he represents many things to many people. At the same time, as is the case with each Prophet, there is a great deal of misunderstanding, misrepresentation of this Prophet; cultural 'baggage' that has been accepted as true and undeniable. I will not attempt to outline those today; rather I will stay to my purpose in these duruus, to point out the relevance of his (Isa's) life to all human beings: past, present and future. *Insh'Allah*

Qur'an tells us in Sura al-Maa'idah:

وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ
التَّوْرَةِ وَأَتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَنُورٌ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ
التَّوْرَةِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

WA QAFFAYNĀ 'ALĀ AThĀRIHIM BI'ISĀ-B'NĪ
MARYAMA MUṢADDIQA-LIMĀ BAYNA YADAYHI
MINA-T-TAWRĀTI WA A'TAYNĀHU-L-'INJĪLA

FIHI HUDANW-WA NURUNW-WA MUSADDIQAL-LIMĀ BAYNA YADAYHI MINA-T-TAWRĀTI WA HUDANW-WA MAW'IDHĀTAL-LI-L-MUTTAQIN.

And We caused Isa, the son of Maryam, to follow in the footsteps [of the earlier prophets], confirming that which was [revealed] before him in the Torah; and We gave him the Evangel (*Injil*) in which there is guidance and light and confirmation of that which preceded it from the Torah, and guidance and admonition for those who guard themselves [for Allah]. [5:46]

Allah refers to Isa ﷺ in Qur'an variously as the "*qalam Allah*," the Word of Allah, as the "*ruh Allah*," spirit of Allah, and also as the Messiah. He is a manifestation, in some way, of the same breath of Allah ﷻ that was blown into Hazrat Adam ﷺ and all of the progeny of all of the followers. That same *ruh* is the microcosmic *ruh* in the human being; and is the higher *ruh* that must be drawn upon in all religions.

The role of the Isa ﷺ as a Prophet is unique in history and understanding. In some ways he was both the physical embodiment of the message as well as the messenger. Just as the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ received revelation from Jibreel, Sayyida Maryam ﷺ was visited by Jibreel, in the form of a human being, with the revelation of a son and messenger to be—we will return to this later, but I point it out now to illustrate that in some sense the Qur'an in Islam is a parallel to what Isa ﷺ is in Christianity. The Qur'an—a direct revelation from Allah—is the to Islam what Jesus is presented to Christians as being, fallacious as that analogy may be, he is seen not only by many as a Divine messenger with teaching for the time and for today but as the living message. There is a vast difference between living the Message of Allah be being the message. I will assume, we as Muslims in this room grasp that difference and will not spend my time on that subject.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

As we look today at the Prophet Isa ﷺ we must also look at the context into which he was born. The prophet Isa came at the time of the Roman rule; the Jewish population was divided, under occupation and rapidly becoming corrupted by the prevailing social and economic realities, moreover there was no real spiritual guidance in that society, religion had been for the common person reduced to form and hierarchical authority, political expediency and opportunism for the elite, and marginalized by the Empiric forces externally and internally where some scholars feel that appeasement of the Romans was the order of the day, mixed with a healthy dose (or unhealthy) of paranoia.

Just as I drew the parallel in the last dars of modern Egypt with the time of Sidna Musa, so too we can see the parallel between the time of Isa ﷺ and the rise of a more materialistic, objectified society; one that affirms form over essence, power over humility, empiric designs over community in today's world.

The Roman Empire was bloated with costs and the colonies were heavily taxed; their resources such as grains were used almost exclusively to feed the Roman population. Economic burdens fell on the lower classes, while the priests and the Roman population were given special favors and status, including the Jewish priests of the time.

This in itself is an interesting and compelling story and comparison to today's Western Empires, which I will defer to another text or time. But suffice it to say, timing is something that is truly in the hands of Allah ﷻ as we have seen with the advent of each of the Prophets of Allah ﷻ.

I ask you to follow this excerpt from a modern Christian scholar with a sense not of the past only, but of the present.

The Roman empire created the façade of peace and security, all the while creating suffering for other parts of the world... Empire was the historical reality that Jesus and the early church endured every day.

Behind the text of Luke's gospel is a historical reality that cannot be ignored during readings and when interpretations are being made.

For Luke, the Roman Empire was a certainty that was inescapable as he recorded the story of Jesus [who] finds his earthly story beginning during the reign of Caesar Augustus. His entire life takes place in the context of being part of a dominated people, who believed that they were a special people group in the eyes of their Creator. Luke's gospel takes full opportunity to situate Jesus within the time-space reality of Roman rule, and demonstrates over and over again how "the kingdom of Jesus subverts and overthrows the kingdom of Rome." This subversion does not come in through revolt-like force, rather Rome's desire for domination over the world is challenged by Jesus' teaching which is manifested through humility.

Time, Place, Person and Circumstance reveal a great deal to the seeker as each of us tries or should try to place our self in those contextual forms. The lives of these *Ambiyaa'* are best understood if and when we progress enough in our own spiritual journey to fulfill our inner and outer duties in respect to the world(s) we inhabit and interact within.

Isa's ﷺ teaching is fresh and different; he exemplifies not only faith but love, not only submission but also courage, not only compassion but forgiveness....These become the cornerstone to the teachings and life of the Prophet Muhammad...his mission of *akhlaaq* and comprehensive inclusive teaching not for just family or community, or tribe, but for all humanity while still respecting their own faith and practices.

These two factors; the evolution of the prophet-hood through each prophet and the and the creating of the master/student, *murshid/mureed* relationship as a means of affirming the potential of all human beings to ascend to a nearer relationship with the Divine presence takes its form from Isa ﷺ and culminates in the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ; leading us to a sense of completion in the outer and Isharat or an indicator or pointer to our own inner evolutionary process as seekers.

The circle of *mureeds*, the companionship of true seekers, begins with the Isa' within us, characterized by the *lateefah khafee* or the hidden. The discussion of the progression in *muraaqabah* thorough the *lataa'if* and the presence of the Prophets is left for another time or referenced in many previous duruus; however what is important is the concept or reality of progressive awakening, of *tajalli* or lucent manifestation / the awareness of the *Fayd* (outpouring of effulgence) from the Divine through the hearts of the *ambiyaa'*. As we come toward the end of these sessions we are also moving vertically toward the synthesis of all the messages in the final Messenger.

MIRACULOUS BIRTH

With that introduction, I want to return our attention to the beginning, to one of the most unique things about the Prophet Isa ﷺ: the story of his mother, Maryam ﷺ and his miraculous birth. In her story and the very act of the birth of Isa ﷺ, we find the message from Allah ﷻ of this Prophet; and we find an example and teachings that ring true for us today.

She was Maryam bint 'Imran from the family lineage of Dawud. She was from a good and wholesome family of the Children of Israel. Allah mentions the story of her mother's pregnancy with her in Surah Aali 'Imran, and how she (Maryam's mother) dedicated her freely for the service of Allah. This meant that she dedicated the child (Maryam) to the service of the Masjid of the Sacred House (in Jerusalem).

فَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَأَنْبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا ...

FA-TAQABBALAHĀ RABBUHĀ BIQABŪLIN
HASANINW-WA-AMBATAHĀ NABĀTAA HASANĀ

...

So her Lord (Allah) accepted her with goodly acceptance. He made her grow in a good manner...
[3:37]

Thus, Maryam was raised among the Children of Israel in an honorable way. She was one of the most devoted female worshippers, well-known for her remarkable acts of worship and perseverance. She lived under the care of her brother-in-law, Zakariyya, who was a Prophet of the Children of Israel at that time. He was a great man among them, whom they would refer to in their religious matters.

...كَفَّلَهَا زَكَرِيَّا كُلَّمَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهَا زَكَرِيَّا الْمِحْرَابَ وَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا رِزْقًا قَالَ يَا مَرْيَمُ أَنَّى لَكِ هَذَا قَالَتْ هُوَ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

KAFFALAHĀ ZAKARIYYĀ KULLAMĀ DAKHALA ‘ALAYHĀ ZAKARIYYĀ-L-MIHRĀBA WA JADA ‘INDAHĀ RIZQAN QĀLA YĀ MARYAMU ANNĀ LAKI HĀDHĀ QĀLAT HUWA MIN ‘INDI-LLĀHI INNA-LLĀHA YARZUQU MA‘NY-YASHĀ‘U BIGHAYRI HISĀB.

Every time Zakariyya entered the Mihrab to (visit) her, he found her supplied with sustenance. He said: “O Maryam! From where have you got this?” She said, “This is from Allah.” Verily, Allah provides to whom He wills, without limit. [3:37]

In Sura Aali Imran it explains that he would find her with winter fruit during the summer and summer fruit during the winter.

Then, when Allah wanted to grant her His servant and Messenger, ‘Isa, one of the five Great Messengers,

...انْتَبَذَتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْقِيًّا فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا...

...INTABADHAT MIN AHLIHĀ MAKĀNAN SHARQIYYĀ—FA-TTAKHADHAT MIN DŪNIHIM HIJĀBAN...

...She withdrew from her family to place in the east—and she took a veil to seclude herself from them...[19:16-17]

This is interpreted by some to mean that she went to the eastern side of the Sacred Masjid in Jerusalem.

...فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا
قَالَتْ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ مِنْكَ إِنْ كُنْتَ نَقِيًّا
قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ غُلَامًا زَكِيًّا

FA-ARSALNĀ ILAYHĀ RŪHANĀ FA-TAMATHHALAHĀ BASHARAN SĀWIYYĀ.

QĀLAT INNĪ A‘UDHU BI-R-RAHMĀNI MINKA IN KU‘NTA TAQIYYĀ.

QĀLA INNAMĀ ANĀ RASŪLU RABBIKI LI‘AHABA LAKI GHULĀMAN ZAKIYYĀ.

...Then We sent to her Our Spirit (*ruhana*) and it took on for her the likeness of a harmoniously proportioned man.

She said: “I take refuge in the Merciful from you, if you are from those who guard themselves [for the sake of Allah]”

He said “I am truly a messenger [from] your Lord, [sent in order] to give you a pure son.” [19:17-19]

And as we know, she replied:

... أَنِّي يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِي بَشَرٌ وَلَمْ أَكْ بَغِيًّا

قَالَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّئْ وَلَنَجْعَلَ آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَرَحْمَةً مِنَّا

...ANNĀ YAKŪNU LI GhULĀMUNW-WA LAM
YAMSASNI BASHARUNW-WA LAM AKU BAGHIYYĀ

QĀLA KADHĀLIKI QĀLA RABBUKI HUWA
‘ALAYYA HAYYINUNW-WA LINAJ⁴-‘ALAHU
ĀYATAL-LI-N-NĀSI WA RAHMATAM-MINNĀ...

“How can I have a son, when I have not been touched
by and many and I am not unchaste?”

He said, “Just like that! Your Lord says, ‘It is easy for
Me. And We will make him to be a Sign for the people
and Mercy from Us’...” [19:20-21]

Much attention and debate is put in today’s world on the miraculous
conception, on this event as some kind of watershed between the
rational and scientific and those of faith and belief. But as Muslims
and Sufis we understand that we can be both rational and faith-full.
Maryam herself was incredulous when she received this message
from Jibreel, but her piety prepared her, in more ways than one, to be
the “bearer” of the Messenger.

إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ اسْمُهُ

الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ

وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

IDh QĀLATI-L-MALĀA’IKATU YĀ MARYAMU
INNA-LLĀHA YUBASHSHIRUKI BIKALIMATIM-
MINHU ISMUHU-L-MASIHU ‘ISĀ-B⁴NU
MARYAMA WA JIHĀN FI-D-DUNYĀ WA-L-
‘ĀKHIRATI WA MINA-L-MUQARRABIN.

WA YUKALLIMU-N-NĀSA FI-L-MAHDI WA
KAHLANW-WA MINA-S-SĀLIHIN.

(Remember) when the angels said: “O Maryam! Verily,
Allah gives you the good news of a Word from Him, his
name will be the Messiah, ‘Isa, the son of Maryam, held
in honor in this world and in the Hereafter, and will be
one of those who are near to Allah.

And he will speak to the people from the cradle and in
manhood, and he will be one of the righteous.” [3:45-46]

As you hear this story, as recounted in Qur’an, listen to the details
that are brought forward—rather than dwell on the miraculous,
Qur’an tells us of the realistic details of life: the pain of childbirth,
the need for food and water, the ridicule and disbelief of family...

فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَانْتَبَذَتْ بِهِ مَكَانًا قَصِيًّا

فَأَجَاءَهَا الْمَخَاضُ إِلَى جِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ قَالَتْ يَا لَيْتَنِي مِتُّ قَبْلَ هَذَا

وَكُنْتُ نَسِيًّا مَنْسِيًّا

فَنَادَاهَا مِنْ تَحْتِهَا أَلَا تَحْزَنِي قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكِ تَحْتَكِ سَرِيًّا

وَهُزِّي إِلَيْكِ بِجِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسَاقُطُ عَلَيْكَ رُطْبًا خَمِيًّا

FA-HAMALAT’HU FA-NTABADHAT BIHI
MAKĀNĀN QASIYYĀ

FA-AJĀA’AHĀ-L-MAKHĀDU ILĀ JIDH’I-N-
NAKH⁴LATI QĀLAT YĀ LAYTANĪ MITTU QAB⁴LA
HĀDHĀ WA KU⁴NTU NASYAM-MA⁴NSIYYĀ

FA-NĀDĀHĀ MIN TAHTIHĀ-LLĀ TAHZANĪ QAD⁴
JA⁴ALA RABBUKI TAHTAKI SARIYYĀ

WA HUZZI ILAYKI BIJIDH’I-N-NAKH⁴LATI
TUSĀQIT⁴-‘ALAYKI RUTABĀN JANIYYĀ

So she bore him [in her womb] and she withdrew with him to a remote place.

And [when] the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm tree, she called out, "Oh the agony! Would that I had died before this and I were in oblivion, utterly forgotten!"

[Then] he called to her from below her [saying], "Do not grieve; your Lord has made [for you] a stream [flowing out from] beneath the palm.

And shake the trunk of the palm toward you and it will drop ripe dates upon you. [19:22-25]

As we know, after 40 days she brings this newborn baby back to her community and they are shocked, saying

يَا أُخْتُ هَآؤُنَ مَا كَانَ أَبُوكَ امْرَأَ سَوْءٍ وَمَا كَانَتْ أُمُّكَ بَعِيًّا

YĀ UKhTA HĀRŪNA MĀ KĀNA ABŪKI IMRĀ
SAW'INW-WAMĀ KĀNAT UMMUKI BAGHIYYĀ.

Oh sister [in the line] of [the prophet] Harun, your father was not an evil man, nor was your mother unchaste. [19:28]

And she points to the child and they continue to ridicule her, until the baby speaks, saying:

... إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا
وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ
حَيًّا

وَرَبًّا بِوَالِدَيْهِ وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْنِي جَبَّارًا شَقِيًّا
وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا

...INNI 'ABDU-LLĀHI ATĀNIYA-L-KITĀBA WA
JA'ALANI NABIYYĀ

WA JA'ALANI MUBĀRAKAN AYNAMĀ KUŔTU WA
AWSĀNI BI-S-SALĀTI WA-Z-ZAKĀTI MĀ DUMTU
HAYYĀ

WA BARRAM BIWĀLIDATI WA LAM YAJ'ALNI
JABBĀRAN SHAQIYYĀ

WA-S-SALĀMU 'ALAYYA YAWMA WULID^{tu} WA
YAWMA AMŪTU WA YAWMA UB'ATHU HAYYĀ

I am the worshipful slave of Allah. He has given me the Book and made me a prophet-and made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined on me the *salah* and the *zakah* so long as I live—

And [He has made me] dutiful to my mother, and [He] has made me neither arrogant nor bereft of grace.

And peace be upon me the day I was born and the day I shall die and day upon which I will be resurrected to life [once again]." [19:30-33]

So we see in these ayats from Qur'an the eloquence of this prophet ﷺ and how he described his own character (dutiful to my mother and neither arrogant nor bereft of grace) and his role at the time (to enjoin *salah* and *zakah*), and for all time (to return at the end of time).

The Prophet Mohammad ﷺ is reported to have said of him, "Hardly a single descendant of Adam is born without Shaytan touching him; the only exceptions are Mary and her son."

When we hear this story, as recounted in Qur'an, of Maryam ﷺ we can feel her anxiety, her struggle, and her trust. Why was the insistence upon the painful childbirth by the Sayyida Maryam ﷺ, amongst the ridiculing and accusations of the people, and the suffering that came upon her?

No prophet was born without a mother, except for the prophet Adam, as the first created being. When we look at the mothers of these prophets we see quite clearly, perhaps with more poignancy, the struggle and challenges faced by those bringing the truth.

Every sweetness, every beautiful object, every important document, every treasure, has some kind of protection over it—a veil. The skin of the orange is not sweet. It protects what is inside and sweet and wholesome. Documents have been put in folios from the beginning of time to protect them. Children are protected in the womb of the mother.

This is the *adab* of protecting what is valuable. Because every modality, every manifestation of the Divine presence, requires *adab*. This *adab* can be seen beautifully in this story of Maryam (عليها السلام). She turns toward Allah to protect her and her child, rather than turning toward worldly means. She is exemplar in her piety and her trust and her reliance on Allah (ﷻ).

We say the child is a mercy for the mother; and in return the mother cares them for. It is also said the mother should never curse the child, or backbite against the child, or accuse the child falsely, or make fun of the child. There are etiquettes of the mother to the child, too; and the father also. This attitude we find made manifest in the mother of the Prophet Isa (عليه السلام) and we see in his love for, and *adab* toward his mother. She is an exemplary personification of the women who deal with loss and difficulty and sorrow with dignity and nobility and faith.

ADAB, THE FRUIT OF LOVE

One of the common factors among the *ambiyaa'* is a perfected *adab*. This can be seen clearly in Prophet Isa (عليه السلام), who is also known as the prophet of Love. To understand *adab*, we have to understand love. The sustaining of *adab*, over time, through all challenges, is the fruit of *muhabbat* / divine love. The fruit of *muhabbat* sustains *adab*, and the seeds of *muhabbat* preserve *adab*. If a person is to have true *adab*, they have to have Divine love. If they are to promote or uplift the character of human beings, then they have to have *muhabbat*. It is

such love that we see as all-inclusive in the life of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)

We see that kind of deep love for the Divine in both the Prophet Isa (عليه السلام) and his mother—a love that manifests as service and grace and nobility, a love that gives healing and breeds self-less sacrifice. As Isa (عليه السلام) said in Sura Al-Imran:

...WA'UB⁴RI'U AL-'AKMAHA WA-L-'AB⁴RASA
WA'UHYI AL-MAWT⁴ BI'D⁴NI-LL⁴HI ... INNA FI
Dh⁴ALIKA LAA'AYATAL-LAKUM IN KUN⁴TUM
MU'MININ.

And I shall heal the blind and the leper, and give life to the dead, by the Permission of Allah... Truly in that is a Sign for you, if you are secure believers. (3:49)

The Prophet Isa's (عليه السلام) love for Allah was deeply refined and this is clearly reflected in his *adab* and manifest in his ability to heal and to love others. The more refined the *muhabbat*; the more sustained the *adab*. Sustaining for what purpose? Sustaining love for the Divine Beloved. If we don't have love for Allah (ﷻ), and for those whom he loves, not only do we not have *muhabbat*, we don't have *adab*.

The more the countenance of *adab* is made clear to the lover, the more the presence of the Beloved. The Beloved wants to be with the lover. The more the etiquette, the proper attitude, the comprehensive behavior / attitude / character is of the Beloved, the more the lover wants to be with the Beloved.

Abu Uthman Ghairi said, *Once the muhabbat is truly genuine, it emphasizes upon the lover (or sits upon the lover, or resides in the lover) a binding by etiquette/ adab.*

In any slave within whose heart the *muhabbat* is deeply rooted, you will find someone who strives very hard to maintain their *adab* for and in the Divine Presence.

What should or could this mean to us? It means that we have to refine both the exterior/outer/*dhaahir* and the *baatin*/interior in order

to create fullness and to perpetuate our relationship with Allah ﷻ. To refine the vessel, the heart and the means of expression, the mind and the tongue, that carries and manifests such potential.

The more the one who loves draws nearer (*qurb*) to that Divine presence, the stronger the desire is in the individual to manifest the subtleties, of *adab*. Not just for general good behavior, but the subtleties: knowing how to serve before being asked; to give without holding back; speak with the most refined language. This also presumes and perpetuates the necessity for *muhaasabah* (accounting for oneself) and *mujaahadah* (striving) for refinement.

We know these subtleties intuitively, when we are in the presence of someone powerful, someone respected, some social or religious leader; some great scholar, we tend to feel some anxiety; some fear maybe; we want to be very, very careful or attentive or transparent. We don't want to make mistakes. We don't want our conduct to be improper.

Imagine then, the more we are aware of being in the presence or moving near to the presence of Allah ﷻ what we can experience. Once the main *adab* toward the Divine presence is obvious to us, we can begin to see the Divine beauty everywhere. We have consciousness that can be refined; indeed directed as it was intended to be directed...toward the Divine.

Just like the lover who doesn't take their eyes off the Beloved, or the Beloved takes their eyes off the lover, so in that Divine presence we cannot change our attention or glance. There is a Hadith of the Prophet ﷺ who said:

If the slave stands to pray, he is in the presence of *Ar Rahman*, the Most Beneficent. If he diverts his attention toward others, his Lord asks him, "Are you diverting your attention toward someone better for you than I? O son of Adam, turn toward Me. I am far better than that which you are paying attention to."

This diversion of attention is translated from the word "*istifaal*." It means a person of their own choice turns their attention away. They are preoccupied with something else.

There is a quatrain that speaks to this focus and presence:

*By love, whose dreams are perpetually in my eye,
its secrets well hidden deep within my mind.
If I remember "Hu," I am nothing at all but a heart.
If I glance at "Hu," I am nothing at all but an eye.*

One of the keys to understanding what *adab* is not to forget who we are and where we are. When you take it to its extension, it is not to forget you are in the presence of the Divine. That is one of the great examples of the Prophet Isa ﷺ who loved all people equally and whose love for Allah ﷻ; who was so singular and focused that his surroundings were irrelevant to his teachings and work as a messenger.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ accepted many distinct roles of religious, social, political, and even military leadership. When we look at the Prophet Isa ﷺ we can see that, in a traditional model of the teacher, he led primarily by example.

The Prophet Isa ﷺ was an exemplar in *Adab*, in remembrance of Allah ﷻ and in service to his community.

Although his birth was a message from Allah ﷻ it wasn't until he was around thirty years old that Allah ﷻ activated the Revelation of Prophethood to Isa ﷺ and he began to teach. Like all the prophets of Allah ﷻ, Isa ﷺ performed miracles. These miracles are referenced by Christians as proof of his Divinity; which of course proves only the power and compassion of Allah ﷻ not the Divinity of his prophet.

It was through the Prophet Isa ﷺ that Allah ﷻ cured those with seemingly incurable illnesses; a man afflicted with leprosy, as well as a man who was born blind. Once Prophet Isa supplicated to Allah ﷻ

to bring back to life one person who had died and was being carried to the burial place, and Allah ﷻ. These and other apparent miracles testify to his nearness with Allah and the value of pursuing such nearness, devotion, trust and submission.

One of the miracles of Isa ﷺ is mentioned in the Qur'an in Surat al-Ma'idah, verses 112-114, which tells about a time when Prophet Isa ﷺ and the people who were with him reached to a place where there was not enough food for all the people. The students of Isa asked him to supplicate Allah ﷻ for food which would come down on them from the sky. Isa ﷺ made supplication to Allah ﷻ and the angels brought down the food before the eyes of the people. Hundreds and hundreds of people ate and there was no sign the food had diminished in quantity.

The Prophet Isa ﷺ lived on earth actively as a Messenger for only about three years. He used to travel from place to place, calling people to worship Allah ﷻ. He was so detached from the worldly matters that he did not worry that he did not even have a place to rest his body at night. He used to sleep wherever he was when night would come. He wore clothing made out of unwoven wool. He ate from the raw plants of the earth, without desiring to cook them. And, as we know, he did not marry or have children. (Albeit there is controversy as to this with regard to Mary Magdalene, who according to some Christian scholars was said to have washed his body before burial; which of course is contrary to dominant Islamic belief that the person crucified was substituted for the Prophet Isa ﷺ—something I will return to later in this talk).

His example is the example of the true *fakir*, one who has no need other than to be near Allah ﷻ. What is the lesson for today in this example? It is a lesson of humility, of reliance on Allah ﷻ. His example is a reminder that in a time of such complexity and selfishness, corruption and conflict what is needed is simplicity and trust in Allah ﷻ, more attention to self and home community or nation. It is the same example we see and refined even more in the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, an example of "being in the world but not of the world."

How do we follow this example? We must constantly remind ourselves who we are, and where we are. Not to show off and provoke or invoke some attention on ourselves nor impose our self, individually or collectively on others. We can constantly ask ourself: "What is it I value? What is it I strive for? What is this life for...power, fame, wealth, domination of others or nearness to Truth, to Love, to Mercy to Allah ﷻ?"

We should strive for the trust of Ibrahim ﷺ, the submission and perseverance of Nuh ﷺ, the faith and conviction of Musa ﷺ, the repentance of Adam ﷺ?

What is it we treasure? What we treasure is where our attention is, and our attention is our intention; our *muraqabah* is a road to our heart and our heart is the dwelling place, or where we find Allah ﷻ. As we know from the Hadith Qudsi:

Heavens and earth failed to contain Me, yet I am contained in the heart of a believer.

THE TEACHINGS OF PROPHET ISA ﷺ.

In the Injeel there are many teachings that we can learn from and that resonate with our inner and outer way. For example, it is attributed that Jesus said, "***For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.***" (Matthew 6:21).

In our heart we can seek the spiritual wealth not the wealth of this world. This is the spiritual poverty of the *Faqeer*. To be of the *Fuqahaa*' is to find the spiritual wealth.

Isa ﷺ also said that there is another kind of spiritual poverty—one we should seek. He said, "***Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven***" (Matthew 5:3). What did He mean? We must be humble in our spirit.

In other words, when we come to Allah ﷻ, we must realize our spiritual emptiness and not be self-satisfied, thinking we don't really need Allah ﷻ.

In a lecture at the Harvard Divinity School two decades ago, Hans Küng pointed out that Islam provides a true witness to the life of Jesus — not the edited gentile Hellenistic version, but a genuine Semitic tradition that probably preserves the Jamesian perspective that was naturally closest to the reality of Jesus.

Evangelicals often work hard to learn scripture in Hebrew and Greek, but unless they actually learn and study the Quran in Arabic, they will never truly understand Jesus and his messianic mission, for the Quran in Arabic represents the oldest, least tampered tradition of Jesus.

Closely reading verses of the Christian and Hebrew Bibles along with ayahs of the Quran can elucidate the plain meaning of all three texts and show unexpected connections.

This is the beginning of an interesting article by Joachim Martillo on language and the Bible, rather than go further into it now, I would be happy to share this with anyone interested.

It is enough though to say that, the Beatitudes (especially when understood in their original language) present a new set of Christian ideals that focus on love and humility rather than force and compelling. They echo the highest ideals of the teachings of Isa ﷺ on mercy, spirituality, and compassion. Build upon the Taurat, they represent one of the cornerstones of the personal journey, only to be refined again and presented once again by Allah swt in the revealed Qur'an and through Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ beginning with the incredibly powerful and concentrated and vital foundational affirmation.

Bismi-Llaahi-r-Rahmaani-r-Rabeem, the root of all the names of Allah ﷻ, is reflected in these teachings: noting they are a Vulgate Translation and quite different in Arabic. I look forward to writing on this subject in the future, *inshaa'a-Llaah*.

Blessed are...

...the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
(5:3)

...those who mourn: for they will be comforted. (5:4)

...the meek: for they will inherit the earth. (5:5)

...those who hunger and thirst for righteousness: for they will be filled. (5:6)

...the merciful: for they will be shown mercy. (5:7)

...the pure in heart: for they will see God. (5:8)

Isa ﷺ and his character set the stage for the perfection of *Akhlaaq* of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. There are many more examples from Injeel of his character and efforts to refine the character of his followers and community:

Isa ﷺ was inclusive. He showed compassion toward social outsiders (lepers: Matthew 8:1-3, Luke 17:11; Mark 1:40-44); he protested gender inequality (Luke 10:38-42) Matthew 9:19-26; John 20:11-18). He embracing the excluded (Luke 18:15-17; Matthew 18:1-7) and challenged cultural practices such as racism, (John 4:1-42, Luke 10; 25-37, Matthew 9: 9-13)

Isa ﷺ confronted the powerful challenged unjust behavior; he confronted the spiritually arrogant and reordered political power (Luke 19; 1-10. Luke 6:1-11; Matthew 23: 1-3, 23-28, Mark 12: 13-17). And, as we have discussed already today, he was an advocate for the oppressed: for the poor, hungry, sick and imprisoned, (Luke 14:12-14, Matthew 25:31-46)

I offer these perspectives and references from the Injeel for the specific reason that this is the source of the Christian worlds' precepts or examples of behavior, behavior of their guide and teacher that should be followed, just as we strive to follow the example and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Just as Muslims should be held to the standard of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the Qur'an, so too we should understand that Christians should be held to the standard of the Prophet Isa ﷺ.

This is the *adab* of brothers (and sisters) in faith; that we should know each other's teachings and help one another to live up to them.

THE ADAB OF LISTENING

But let me return now to *Adab* of the Prophets: One of the greatest *adabs* is the *adab* of listening. This is the first *adab* of every prophet, every prophet who must be quiet enough—inside and out—to hear, to hear the revelation, to hear the message of Allah, to hear the response to his call. This is the *adab* that the Prophet Isa عليه السلام displayed and fostered in others—from his birth, when he first spoke and created a context for listening—and in the years of his prophethood, when we traveled and spoke and listened, to the poor and sick and downtrodden.

This *adab* is the ability or attentiveness to listen to the spoken Divine word, and diverting one's hearing from listening to the *nafs* and the '*aalam al-khalaq* (created world) and instead paying attention to the '*aalam al amr* and the divine commandments. It requires turning away from the '*aalam al khalaq* and the whisperings of the world.

This example can be seen again in the story of Maryam عليها السلام who, rather than run to her family or ask for help, secluded herself during the time of her pregnancy and sought refuge in Allah ﷻ.

It is also found in the example of prophet Musa and the burning bush, which spoke to him in the speech of the pre-existent time, pre-eternity. It spoke the words, **Verily I am Allah.**

It is the example Yusuf عليه السلام who listened to the meaning of his dreams, and the example of Ibrahim عليه السلام who listened to the command from Allah ﷻ. And, of course, it is the example of our Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in the cave on Mount Hira.

To hear, one must first be quiet and listen. Reading the Qur'an, speaking the truth, or enjoining to do good; during worship or at other times, one must quiet the "noise" of the mouth and the mind, quite the opinions and desires, the doubts and worries; only in quiet one can hear the voice of the soul. To listen is to be aware that even

one's tongue or someone else's tongue can be a conduit to convey the Divine words in the form of speech, so your ears can hear it.

In order to understand the Divine words of the Qur'an, one has to give up listening to all the others. When the Qur'an is read, we should listen and be quiet in our hearts and receive the Mercy of it.

When we look at the Prophet Isa عليه السلام who is an archetype of good *adab*, and at what he said and did throughout his life, even as an infant; and how his mother treated him, and how he spoke to his followers, we can see why Allah chose him to be this example of love and of hidden secrets / hidden truths.

In the language of these prophets, we see that when they speak to Allah or about Allah, they are fully aware of the blessings that have come to them. In that love, lovers keep safe in their hearts their secrets. The secrets of that love can never be uttered. The deeper the love, there are no words to utter it. The Divine secrets, hidden in that *muhabbat*, through that *adab*, are another form of *adab*. That is how divine secrets are kept, in the heart; that is the source of the inner strength of the Prophets عليهم السلام.

INNER REFLECTIONS OF THE ANBIYYA (IBN ARABY)

If we want to understand something more inward about prophet Isa عليه السلام; something more than his life and the differences between himself and between Christianity and Islam, a good place to look is Ibn Araby. His perspective is fairly basic: that each of the saints /walis of Allah; all of the *shuyukh* (all of the *awliya'u-Llaah*), take their *maqam* at some point from one of the prophets. We look at it vis-a-vis the *lat'af*. Each *lateefah* has a prophet, and a color, etc. Prophet Adam, Prophet Enoch, Prophet Ibrahim, Prophet Daoud, Prophet Musa, the Prophet Isa, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ all have their identities with one of the previous prophets.

In Ibn Araby's view, every age must have at least 124,000 friends of Allah—one heir for each prophet. The prophetic inheritances delineate the possible modes of authentic experience and correct knowledge of Allah, the universe, and the human soul. In other words, to attain true knowledge, one must know and act in accordance with the paradigm of

human perfection embodied in a prophet. No one comes to know things as they are without these divinely appointed intermediaries.

Herein lies perhaps one of the incentives to sit in *muraqabah* and to come to realize the dominant prophet of your soul. What we need to do is study their lives, as we are doing this year, to understand each one's unique characteristics and role. We need to understand ourselves, to identify ourselves with those qualities and aspects that we need to refine, in order to change ourselves.

When one looks in one's heart and sees the reflection of the *ambiyaa'* of Allah, there is something that will attract your attention, and you will see, that certain qualities or aspects of your own self are to be manifest through your identification with the specific prophet.

Again Shaykh ul Akbar says,

*Sometimes as death approaches, the prophet from whom the person has inherited will be disclosed to him. As the Prophet Muhammad said, **The possessors of knowledge are heirs to the prophets.** Hence, as death approaches, he will see Jesus, Moses, Ibrahim, Muhammed, or some other prophet. And some of them may pronounce the name of the prophet from whom they have inherited in joy, when he comes to them. For the messengers are all among the felicitous. And while passing, such a person will say, "Jesus," or will call out "messiah..."*

Those present will hear the friend of Allah speak words of this sort and become suspicious, saying, "At death he became a Christian!" Or "A Muslim!" Or he would name Moses and that he became a Jew. But this person is one of the greatest possessors of felicity in Allah's eyes, for the common people never know this locus of witnessing, the lateefah that is his or her doorway to the next stage of existence; only the people of Allah, the possessors of the unveilings know in their own soul.

For those of us who take the purity and sanctity and elevation of the *ambiyaa'* seriously, understand this tendency is important. It is clear in doing that, one is not leaving Islam. Quite the contrary, we are affirming Islam. And we don't say a person cannot achieve some

level of sanctity or purity through Christianity or Judaism; or that only Sufis reach nearness to Allah through Islam.

Ibn Araby again says, *(Jesus) was my first teacher, the master through whom I returned to Allah.* Even preceding his study of Sufic texts, with living teachers and his visions and dreams of saints in the '*aalam al khayal*' / the imaginal world, he wrote,

It was and is at Isa's hands that I converted, turned to Allah and the spiritual path. He prayed for me that I should persist in the Deen, and in this low world / dunya, and in the other. And he called me his beloved, and he ordered me to practice renunciation and self-denial.

As a result of the influence of Isa ﷺ, Shaykh al Akbar, a great Muslim saint, renounced the world for 18 years.

The *Awliyyaa'u-Llaah* all have certain similar characteristics. The Prophet Isa ﷺ, as too with the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, saw the best in all people and in all circumstances, despite their outer form or appearance.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ knew which characteristics and qualities represented the other *ambiyaa'*. He referred to them, as we do today when we say, "that person has the wisdom of Solomon." Or, "His poetry is like the songs of Daoud." Or she has "The patience of Job." We say these things. But do we understand what it means?

On our *sayr-i-suluk*, we should understand that when we are experiencing certain qualities, we are accompanied by that prophet; in moments of compassion, the Prophet Mohammad ﷺ, in the moments of seeing the beauty in all things, the Prophet Isa ﷺ. They are your companions on the way. Certain of the *awliyyaa'u-Llaah* inherit a kind of spirituality of sanctity from that particular prophet. What is most important is that those saints, whose lives, poetry, writings, words, and legacy bear the resemblance to the other prophets.

DEATH, ASCENSION AND RETURN

As I come toward the end of my talk today, I will return to the chronology of the life of the Prophet Isa ﷺ, and hopefully also reflect on the lessons and meanings we can take with us from his example.

When the Prophet Isa ﷺ was 33 years old, only three years after he began teaching, the power-hungry among the offspring of Israel plotted to kill him. Ibn Abi Hatim and an-Nasa'iy narrated from the words of Ibn Abbas the following account:

Prophet Isa ﷺ was in session with twelve of his elite companions in a house. He told them that among them would be who would blaspheme in the future. Then he asked them, "Who among you would want to be made to look like me, be killed in my place, and be my companion in Paradise." The youngest among them stood up and said, "Me." Prophet Isa ﷺ told him to sit, then repeated his same question. Again, the same young man said, "Me." Again, Prophet Isa ﷺ told him to sit, then again asked the same question. After the same young man volunteered for the third time, Prophet Isa ﷺ received the Revelation that this young man would be the one who would be made to look like him and killed instead of him. Prophet Isa ﷺ was raised to the sky from an opening in the ceiling of the house. When the Jews came after Prophet Isa ﷺ, they saw that young man, whom Allah ﷻ made to look like Isa. They took him, thinking he was Prophet Isa ﷺ, and crucified him.

Of course, the crucifixion is a central part of Christian theology and there have been various debates in the Islamic community about the death of the Prophet Isa ﷺ and its significance. But Allah ﷻ says clearly and addresses this in Qur'an, in Sura An-Nisaa:

وَمَا صَلَّوْهُ وَلَكِنْ شَبَّهَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِنْهُ
مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتَّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا
بَلْ رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا

...MĀ SALABŪHU WA LĀKIN SHUBBIHA LAHUM
WA'INNA-LLADHĪNA IKHTALAFŪ FĪHĪ LAFI
SHAKKIM-MINHU MĀ LAHUM BIHĪ MIN 'ILMIN
ILLĀ ITTIBĀ'A-Dh-DhANNI WA MĀ QATALŪHU
YAQINĀ.

BAL RAFA'AHU-LLĀHU ILAYHI WA KĀNA-LLĀHU
'AZIZAN HAKIMĀ.

...They neither killed him nor did they crucify him, but it only appeared so to them, and truly those who differ are filled with doubts. They have no real knowledge of it, just conjecture. And for certain they did not kill him—

rather Allah raised him to Himself. And Allah is Exalted, Wise. [4:157-158]

Just as with his miraculous birth, the end of his life is also known only by Allah ﷻ and must be accepted on faith. Rather than conjecture and doubts about what is possible, what is logical, or "what really happened," we are shown by Allah ﷻ a way of Truth that is part of a great and miraculous universe, greater than our comprehension.

When we look with eyes that see at the universe around us, we see miracles all around us; we begin to understand that the birth of every healthy child is a miracle, the last breath of every person a gift, food on our table each day a blessing and sign from Allah ﷻ. Do the explanations of science or logic or history make those miracles any less miraculous?

So, too, we are told that there are unexplained ends in our future and that the Prophet Isa ﷺ will return to preside over them. It is told that He will descend to earth before the Day of Judgment and his descent will be one of the great signs of the nearing of that Day.

Prophet Muhammad ﷺ informed us that Isa will descend to earth at a place on the eastern side of Damascus, with his hands on the wings of two angels. He will meet a group of Muslims getting ready to

perform the Prayer, with the Mahdi as their Imam. The Mahdi will ask Prophet Isa (عليه السلام) to lead them in that prayer, however, Isa (عليه السلام) will ask the Mahdi to stand imam for them—as a sign that Prophet Isa (عليه السلام) will rule with the rules revealed to Prophet Muhammad, the final Prophet. After this one time, Isa (عليه السلام) will lead the people in prayers.

He will kill the Dajjal (Anti-Christ), he will perform Hajj and travel to visit the grave of the Prophet to salute him, and to greet him by saying, *"As-salaamu alaykum yaa rasul Allah,"* as narrated by Abu Dawud at-Tayalisiyya and others.

During his time, the people of Ya'juj and Ma'juj will appear and cause great destruction to the earth and devastation to the Muslims. Prophet Isa (عليه السلام) will take the believers to Mount at-Tur to supplicate Allah (ﷻ) there to relieve them from these people. Allah (ﷻ) will answer their *du'aa'* and destroy all the people of Ya'juj and Ma'juj. After that, Prophet Isa will rule the Muslims and there will be a time when peace, comfort, and safety will prevail. Prophet Isa will live for forty (40) years on earth after he descends. He will marry and have children. Then, he will die and be buried. Abdullah Ibn Salam said, "It is written in the original Torah that Prophet Isa will be buried next to Prophet Muhammad."

In a sense, we can say that at the time of the mashiyya / messiah, the return of the Prophet Isa (عليه السلام) and the prayers uttered before the Mahdi, are the compilation that comes in the Prophet Muhammad or the Muhammadan light. The last brick has been placed in the building. That last brick is the last brick of knowledge, of understanding.

THE TEMPLATE FOR TRUST

What does this mean for us, here? Today? Why is it important to know and to believe this? What we see in these *Ambiyaa'* are the models, the prototypes, or the templates for all of the *mureedeen*, all of us who follow—templates for trust, for sacrifice, for submission, for service. What we can do is become lovers of Allah. Lovers of Allah are lovers of all the prophets; and lover of all the prophets are lovers

of all those who follow those prophets. Lovers of all those who follow those prophets are people who have the qualities of those prophets: the patience of Job, the perseverance of Noah, the devotion and trustworthiness of Ibrahim (عليه السلام), the vision, strength, and power of Musa and Harun, the love of prophet Isa (عليه السلام), and the compassion and mercy of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

We can go into the parallels between people, between the mother of Musa (عليه السلام) and the mother of Isa (عليه السلام); between the sacrifice of Isa (عليه السلام) and the sacrifice of Ibrahim (عليه السلام).... There are many parallels; the point comes again to the fact that Allah repeats these cycles, and everything is analogous. There are certain basic lessons that we must learn to be successful in our return to Allah (ﷻ): lessons of trust in the face of disbelief, of submission to the will of Allah, of patience with challenges and suffering.... If you don't see the story here, you can see it there.

Eventually we will see the aggregate of all the lessons and examples in the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)—the last brick in the building. This last brick is the keystone in the arch.

Certainly, among all these prophets we find no suffering. The Prophet Adam (عليه السلام) suffers from falling. Prophet Noah suffers from 950 years of frustration and seeing the loss of his family. Prophet Ibrahim (عليه السلام) has to walk through fire, and then suffers at the thought of the sacrifice of his son. Prophet Musa (عليه السلام) suffers from being separated from his mother; being in the Pharaoh's court, kills a man, and then has to wander in the desert for forty years.

Prophet Isa (عليه السلام) suffers from being betrayed, and being outcast, and doubting. But what is the Prophet (ﷺ) really experiencing in those moments? In reality, he doesn't suffer because he has taken all of this compassion and all of this ability to see the good. It has become congealed in him; it becomes his being. He is a lover and beloved of Allah (ﷻ)—accepting and welcoming all things, because they come from the Beloved.

INNA MA'A-L-'USRI YUSRA.

With hardship goeth ease.

Just as the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ prays to Allah, so does Isa ﷺ pray to Allah. Those who choose justice over injustice or right over wrong or Truth over lies, knowing that their life is to be taken for it, are indeed the people by whose light, darkness flees, whose absence, presence comes and is replaced—replaced in the sense that one knows the nuances of their *laṭaa'if*, their bodies, and one can direct the light of the Prophet through your body, through your capillaries, through your veins, through all the resources that your body has.

If you bathe yourself in the truth, your physical being will open its doors and direct that knowledge and that truth or that light back to the core of the creation, the circle becomes complete. The circuitry becomes complete.

They choose to stand under the truth. It is called understanding. That is the dome we should have over us at all times.

These prophets ﷺ represent a dynamic, living process. There is no quid pro quo in the dunya. There is no redemptive suffering. One changes because of their own will, their own submission to Allah ﷻ, their own good actions, their own faith, their own trust. There is no savior.

We have to understand that when we are looking at the Prophet 'Isa ﷺ and the Prophet Mohamed ﷺ, we are looking at people but we are also looking at metaphors. When we look at their family life, we are looking at people, but we are also looking at metaphors. People believe what they believe. Until you know why you believe what you believe, until you understand why these prophets are linked together and why the Prophet ﷺ is the final prophet, which means that the onus of all spirituality lies on us, not that Allah is absent, but Allah

becomes present through our *shuyukh* and through other *awliya'a'u-Llah*.

If you don't find Allah within your own self, then you cannot find Allah because Allah says "That is where I live." Nobody can find Allah ﷻ for you. You can do many things. When we discover the precocious sacredness of a moment, we have to be prepared to seize it, and to savor it, knowing that we do not know the past of the future as Allah ﷻ does. Every moment and every breath belongs to Allah ﷻ, and he can and will recall us to Him at the moment of His choosing—as He did with His beloved servant Isa ﷺ.

CLOSING DU'AA

*Allahumma Rabba-s-samawati-s-sabi
Wa Rabba-l-Arshi-l-Adheem:
Rabba-na wa Rabba kulli shai':
Munazzila 't-Tawrati wa 'l-Injili wa' l -Furqan:
Faliqa 'l-habbi wa 'n-nawa
A'udhu bi-ka min sharri kulli dhi sharr:
Wa min Sharri kulli dabbatin Anta Akhidhun
Bi-nasiyati-ha*

O Allah. Lord of the seven heavens and Lord of the Mighty
Throne,
Our Lord and the Lord of every thing,
Revealer of the Torah, the Gospel and the Criterion,
Splitter of the grain and the date-stone,
I take refuge with You from the evil of everything capable of
evil,
And from the evil of every crawling creature that you are
grasping by its forelock.

*Subhana-Llaahi wa-l-hamdu li-Llaahi
Wa laa ilaaha illa-Llaahu
Wa-Llaahu Akbar*

Glory be to Allah, and Praise be to Allah,
And there is no god but Allah,
And Allah is Supremely Great

*Bismi-Llaahi-r-Rahmaani-r-Raheem
Amana 'r Rasulu bi-ma unzila ilai-hi min Rabvbi-hi wa'l -
mu'minun*

In the Name of Allah, the All-Merciful and the All-
Compassionate
The Messenger believes in that which has been sent down to
him from his Lord, as so do the believers. (2:285)

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